

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL
1999

S-1786

COMMUNIST CULTURAL AND PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES
IN LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

4548

Basic Fact Sheet

Cost: Since the mid-fifties, expenditures by Communist countries for cultural and propaganda programs directed toward less developed countries have expanded rapidly and now exceed \$430 million annually.

Communist expenditures for broadcasting, academic scholarships, book exports and information offices account for about 65% of the total cost.

The USSR underwrites about one half the cost of these programs; the East European Communist countries about one quarter; and Communist China most of the remainder.

USIA funds for programs in less developed countries are currently about \$90 million.

Programs: Instruments employed in the Communist cultural offensive include:

- (1) binational cultural agreements and societies
- (2) scientific, artistic, athletic and other exchanges
- (3) news agency agreements and press representatives
- (4) books, films and exhibits
- (5) radio broadcasts
- (6) academic scholarships for study in Communist countries
- (7) economic aid for information media and educational facilities

Targets: Activities have expanded most rapidly in Africa with Ghana and Mali major Communist targets.

The bulk of the Soviet effort is concentrated in the Middle East and South Asia, with India the prime target.

Most of the Chinese effort has been in the Far East with special emphasis on Indonesia.

The underlying motivation of these Communist efforts directed toward the less developed world suggests at least a two fold objective. They seek through such means first to identify themselves with the aspirations of the developing countries and to distract them from the realities of Communist policy. The Soviets make their appeal by offering the USSR as a model society, one worthy of emulation. The Chinese stress their common struggle against imperialism and their parallel revolutionary experience. Second, they both seek to create the basis for lasting rapport and cultural contact which, they hope, will facilitate their efforts to influence and shape the developing economic and social order and political orientation of the new nations.

To give added substance to their efforts at "image building" in the less developed world, the Communists have effectively orchestrated their cultural and propaganda programs with liberal doses of tangible material aid. A glance at the map suggests not only the extent and variety of the cultural and propaganda instruments employed, but also the concentration of economic aid (depicted by the underlined countries on the map) on those countries which are also targets of the Communist cultural relations program. Perhaps a measure of the importance which the Communists attach to this program is the fact that annual expenditures on cultural and propaganda activities are roughly equal to their disbursements under foreign aid to the area.

In the brief time allotted to me this morning I will concentrate on two programs, which in terms of anticipated impact and expenditures involved, are among the most significant.

A major Communist effort costing some \$80 million annually, is propaganda broadcasts beamed to less developed countries. The propaganda conscious Communist leaders early appreciated the advantages of this channel of communication that can reach large audiences, leap over political boundaries and make a unique appeal to the illiterate masses of the less developed world.

In 1965 Communist transmissions to less developed countries exceeded 2,400 hours per week -- a four fold increase since 1955. All Communist transmissions to these countries were more than 6 times the volume of output of the Voice of America: the USSR alone broadcasts almost twice as many hours per week to the area as does the United States.

The Far East continues to be the main target of Communist radio propaganda drawing almost half of the total. Broadcasts beamed to African countries have shown the greatest relative increase from only 3 hours per week when they first began in 1956 to almost 375 hours scarcely a decade later.

Another important component of the Communist cultural relations program has been the awarding of more than 21,000 all-expense scholarships for academic study in Communist countries for periods as long as 5 or 6 years. Through such prolonged training programs the Communists hope to establish important relationships with,

and shape the attitudes and operational techniques of, a potential elite in less developed countries which they hope will exert substantial influence on the orientation of existing regimes and on the choice of their successors.

At present there are almost 16,000 such students in Communist countries at an annual cost to the Communists of \$40 million, two-thirds of which is borne by the USSR. Communist China has not been a particularly active participant in this program, accounting for less than 3 percent of the total number of students present in Communist countries.

Although the number of students in Communist countries is modest when compared with the total in the United States -- there are currently in the US almost three times the number of students studying in all Communist countries -- a major attraction of Communist scholarships for students from the less developed world is their all inclusive financial support, covering travel expenses, a clothing allowance and a stipend which is twice that given to Soviet students. Only 10 percent of those in the US receive full US government support; 40 percent are self supporting; 7 percent receive support from their own governments; and 43 percent receive full or partial support from academic institutions or private organizations.

The success of this program, however, is still open to question. Student disaffection, largely for reasons of alleged racial discrimination, has led to violent demonstrations and bad

publicity. Such incidents have caused the Communist authorities to make more rigid the political and academic selection criteria for new students and strengthened a trend within some of the governments of developing countries to exercise greater control over which of their nationals study abroad and where. Such developments may have contributed, in large part, to the declining number of new students enrolling in Communist institutions. What is clear, however, is that of the roughly 2,900 students who have returned from study in the USSR, an estimated 700 have left prior to the completion of their studies and largely for reasons of disaffection. While this is a modest defection rate of only 5 percent, it does represent a sizable number of students who have returned home to share their unsatisfactory experiences with their fellow countrymen.

Such costly cultural and propaganda programs are at best a calculated risk no less for the Communists than for ourselves. Enough successes have been achieved, however, in enhancing the Communist image in the less developed world to suggest that these efforts will be maintained and even expanded over the next few years. Where the volume and range of such activities are already deemed substantial, Communist efforts will be directed toward refining existing programs.

The large number of cultural agreements that are being concluded with less developed countries -- almost 80 were signed with 35 countries in 1955 alone -- should provide for increasing

numbers of cultural exchange delegations, exhibitions, etc. The number of books published in the USSR in languages spoken in less developed countries has doubled since 1954 and this effort is likely to continue.

While student disaffection constitutes a continuing and vexing problem for Communist countries and they may already have decided to scale down their academic training programs; or at least check their expansion, on the basis of the old Communist principle of "better fewer, but better," there is no indication that such difficulties will lead to any fundamental revision of the program. And their efforts to assist in the building and staffing of educational institutions abroad shows no abatement.

The hours of Communist broadcasting beamed to less developed areas will probably expand over the next few years although probably at a less rapid rate than during the past decade. But in this area too the Communists will devote greater efforts to maximize the impact of the program through attempts to generate more audience interest, to introduce more subtlety in propaganda themes and to tailor broadcasts toward specific target countries or groups within countries.

Following the trend of recent years, overall activities will probably expand most rapidly in Africa, and more gradually in Asia and the Middle East where the Communist effort already is a substantial one. Because of the lack of receptivity on the part of most Latin American governments for official cultural contacts with

Communist countries, the Communists here will continue to rely heavily on the traditional technique of working through local Communist parties.

Finally, Sino-Soviet differences have added a new dimension to the overall Communist cultural offensive in less developed countries and their efforts to purvey competing ideologies and models for economic and political development will continue heavily to influence the volume and content of Communist cultural and propaganda activities in all less developed countries.